

The regular meeting of Roanoke City Council which convened on Monday, October 18, 2001, and declared in recess until Monday, October 29, 2001, was called to order on October 29, 2001, at 12:15 p.m., in the Emergency Operations Center Conference Room, Room 159, Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building, 215 Church Avenue, S. W., City of Roanoke, by Mayor Ralph K. Smith.

**PRESENT:** Council Members W. Alvin Hudson, Jr., William White, Sr., Linda F. Wyatt, William D. Bestpitch, William H. Carder, C. Nelson Harris, and Mayor Ralph K. Smith-----7.

**ABSENT:** None-----0.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Darlene L. Burcham, City Manager; William M. Hackworth, City Attorney; James D. Grisso, Director of Finance; and Mary F. Parker, City Clerk.

**HOUSING-GRANTS:** The City Manager advised that the work session was being held for City Council to discuss a number of items that either were on the horizon or warranted discussion at this particular time. She further advised that four items had been previously identified, the first had to do with the selection or designation of a neighborhood within a community for concentrated rehabilitation and other improvements.

The City Manager called on Rolanda Johnson, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, and staff to make the presentations.

The Assistant City Manager for Community Development advised that in September 2001, Council made a decision to change how the City administered its Community Development Block Grant funds; whereupon, she recognized Frank Baratta, Budget Team Manager.

Mr. Baratta presented information that involved the recent implementation and integration of the new HUD Funds Policy, which was adopted at the September 17, 2001 Council meeting. He advised that the Policy addresses critical needs for a community, increases emphasis on housing, focuses on target areas, concentrates on resources, and aims for self-sufficiency with regard to on-going programs. He called attention to three pilot project areas that have been identified: Old Southwest, Mountain View, and southeast Roanoke, which was discussed with the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership Steering Committee at its meeting on October 17, 2001.

Mr. Baratta further advised that the City Manager would like to recommend a pilot project site in the southeast area by July 1, 2002; the southeast project will be a multi-activity approach that may include leveraging funds from the private/public sector, use of City resources, and HUD funds. He reiterated that the City is seeking direction with regard to offering the pilot project to the southeast area, having discussed the matter with the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership Steering Committee, staff review indicates a sound selection, and a challenging kick-off for implementing and integrating the HUD policy.

Council Member White inquired as to how "Christmas in April" and Housing Design Competition sparked an early HUD policy roll-out; whereupon, Mr. Baratta advised that "Christmas in April" approached the Assistant City Manager for Community Development to inquire about support from the City involving the possibility of linking two activities together; and Housing Design Competition is trying to raise funds for design competition to create designs for affordable and non-affordable housing.

Mr. Bestpitch stated since a positive response was received from the Southeast Action Forum to receive support, it would be advantageous to hold meetings with the Belmont Neighborhood organization and the Southeast Christian Partnership. He further stated that individuals who no longer reside in the neighborhood, but continue to attend church in the area might have an interest in the neighborhood; and this could be an avenue to generate additional support.

**ANIMALS:** The City Manager introduced a briefing with regard to wildlife management in the City of Roanoke.

Police Officer Michael Quesenberry advised that every city and county in Virginia is faced with deer being a nuisance and destroying private property; deer are attracted to gardens, shrubs and yard plants; and construction also has changed where deer live today. He further advised that the Animal Control Unit consists of 80 authorized officers who respond to all animal related calls for service, provide coverage seven days a week, with an officer assigned to emergency standby duties after hours; animal control officers or police patrol officers respond to domestic and wildlife calls throughout the City; last year, the Animal Control Unit responded to 5,713 calls for animal related offenses, with the majority of calls related to domestic animals, basically cats and dogs; and approximately less than one per cent of all animal offenses reported pertained to deer related calls.

Officer Quesenberry displayed a graph showing the percentage of wildlife calls, versus the total number of animal related offenses, as follows:

**Wildlife and Traffic Offenses:** During the past year, a total of 4,181 motor vehicle accidents were reported in the City. The graph shows a dramatic difference in the number of animal related accidents versus the total accident report.

**Educational Materials:** The literature gives citizens suggestions on how to rid themselves of nuisance deer. Effective deer control methods, tips and hints, some of the recommendations given to the citizens are the use of repellants, such as soap, feather mill, blood mill, moth balls, and animal waste. Commercial chemicals repellants include deer way, deer off, miller hot sauce, and deer buster.

**Restricting Deer Access:** This pertains basically to fences that are made up of slanted seven wire, woven or electrical wire. Scare devices include lotions, sensory devices and/or silent alarms, feathered dolls.

Dr. James A. Parkhurst, Associate Professor, Wildlife Services, Virginia Tech, and Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Services, highlighted the following points with regard to deer habitats and their habits:

Deer are highly adaptable animals. They live in a natural environment, which is subject to changes and seek out habitats that present a changing environment;

Deer are extremely productive. Each doe, after its first year, throughout most of Virginia, will produce twins annually;

Ideal conditions for deer are plenty of food, plenty of cover, no predators, and no constraints.

In closing, Dr. Parkhurst stated that the Game Department is trying to stabilize or reduce deer herds statewide; and the City has a very unique advantage because it is attempting to address the deer population early on in order to be proactive rather than reactive.

Mr. Jay Jeffries, Wildlife Biologist, advised that Urban Deer Management is probably the single most difficult problem that wildlife resource managers face, not only in Virginia, but nationwide; and the following cities/towns/counties are actively engaged in an urban deer management program: Lynchburg, Fairfax, Williamsburg, Danville, Blacksburg, Pennsylvania and Halifax; all programs implement lethal control means for deer management, either through sharpshooters hired by the local governing body, hunting, trapping and killing; and the Game Department issues several different types of permits that enables the local authority to reduce deer

numbers.

Following the presentation, Mr. Jeffries distributed copy of the Virginia Deer Management Plan.

The Assistant City Manager for Community Development requested Councils approval to create a task force consisting of City staff and citizens to study the matter and report to Council.

Council Member White suggested that local jurisdictions in the Roanoke Valley be contacted to discuss the matter on a regional basis.

**DOWNTOWN ROANOKE, INC.- CONSULTANTS:** The City Manager introduced Barry Long, representing Urban Design Associates, to present a briefing on major initiatives offered in the Outlook Roanoke Plan for downtown Roanoke; whereupon, Mr. Long highlighted the following:

**Elmwood Park Initiative**

Revitalization of the Park - if the Library is rebuilt in the park, consultants recommend that it be located on the high land close to Elm Avenue; thereby opening the rest of the park to both Jefferson Street and Bullitt Avenue.

Patrick Henry Hotel - a landmark hotel located on one corner of Elmwood Park which is a structure well-suited for residential use.

Carilion Hospital Property - the Biomedical Institute begins just south of the hospital and will be integrated with Elmwood Park.

Motel Site - large enough to accommodate structured parking and two developments. Alternatives include an office building and a new library, two office buildings, or an apartment building and an office building.

Heironimus Building - the former department store has high ceilings and a large bay structure that makes it ideal for a number of uses including: loft apartments, high tech offices and Accelerator@office space, retail uses, or public facilities such as a Library. Its large windows provide visual access from the street, which could create an open accessible environment for the

**Library.**

## **E-Town Initiative**

**E-Square** - the existing parking lot should be transformed into a public square to serve as the center of E-Town. It should continue to provide parking, but add pedestrian-scale amenities. It should be designed to be a performance or festival space on weekends when cars are removed.

**E-Square Lofts** - on the south side of Salem Avenue, this site is ideal for multi-purpose buildings designed as loft buildings that could be used for offices, live/work, or residential uses.

**Warehouse Row** - the buildings are well-suited for high tech offices and are presently under consideration for adaptive re-use.

**First Street Bridge** - the bridge with its symbolic significance as a cultural link between historic Gainsboro and downtown is in great need of repair. Without through traffic, commercial development on Henry Street is not viable, and the role of the bridge in uniting diverse cultures will be diminished. Consultants recommend that the proposed elevator be constructed at the south end of the bridge to address accessibility issues, but the bridge also continue to allow vehicular traffic.

**Henry Street and the Higher Education Center** - the Higher Education Center has succeeded beyond expectations. New office construction could be used to rebuild the urban character of Henry Street.

**The Grand Building** - although this building appears to be one building, it has several smaller buildings combined behind a unified facade. It is an ideal location for downtown apartments.

**Roanoke Times Alternative** - since the design charrette, The Roanoke Times has proposed a 54,000 square foot printing facility to be located parallel to Salem Avenue and south of the proposed E-Square. The Times building will replace the E-Square Lofts Initiative.

Mr. Hudson expressed concern about the relocation of the Library to the Heironimus Building, citing the high volume of traffic and the lack of parking at the

original site; whereupon, Mr. Long stated that the matter has been addressed in different ways under two different sites; the Heironimus Building is a one-story building, the ABC store next door would be demolished and the site could be used for a parking garage; and there would be some drive-in parking next to the Library.

Mr. Bestpitch raised a question concerning the issue of the north end of the First Street Bridge where the parking garage extends outward, and how much of an issue would it be to reestablish First Street Bridge for vehicular traffic; whereupon, Mr. Long stated that the bridge should be used for cars, not truck traffic.

Mr. Bestpitch commented on the recommendations with regard to Elmwood Park; there are two elements of Elmwood Park that exist today that are apparent: (1) large, mature trees and it is important to preserve as many trees as possible; (2) outcropping of rocks along the rise, which was naturally excavated at some point and is a unique feature. He strongly opposed any design that would eliminate the rocks.

Due to concerns expressed by Mr. Hudson with regard to parking in E-Square, the City Manager suggested that a meeting be scheduled with the parking consultant in the near future.

Mr. Bestpitch called attention to transit and parking issues, and stated that he was in support of a shuttle down Jefferson Street, however, the shuttle should be extended. Mr. Long stated that the shuttle must be launched at the right moment in order to be successful, and it may be advantageous to wait until the first phase of the Carilion Biomedical Institute has been completed.

**FUTURE OF GRANDIN THEATRE:** Council Member Harris called attention to a business plan that was prepared by the Grandin Theatre Foundation relative to acquiring, rehabilitating, and operating the Grandin Theatre. He advised that in anticipation of an announcement of the closing of the Grandin Theatre, a number of citizens met to discuss the issue of the Grandin Theatre operating as a non-profit community-base theatre.

Mr. Harris requested that Council consider partnering with the Grandin Theatre Foundation, Inc., essentially in saving the Grandin Theatre; if the Grandin Theatre is lost as a film venue, the City has lost its one venue; Grandin Road merchants have clearly indicated that they consider the Grandin Theatre to be a key to the economic vibrancy of the Grandin Road commercial district; and the Grandin Theatre Foundation is seeking approximately \$1.2 million, \$400,000.00 for acquisition, \$800,000.00 for renovations to the inside of the Theatre and update projection

**equipment.**



**Council Member Harris stated that the Foundation requests a partnership with the City of \$500,000.00, with the City to consider an initial appropriation of \$100,000.00, which would allow the Foundation to begin acquiring the Theatre; and if the Grandin Theatre Foundation cannot acquire the Theatre in a timely manner, the owner has no other alternative but to offer the Theatre for sale.**

**Mr. Harris further stated that over a period of five years, the City is requested to appropriate \$80,000.00 per year, for a total of \$500,000.00; in order to receive funds from the City, the Grandin Theatre Foundation will raise an equal amount, which will be a dollar for dollar match through private sector fundraising efforts.**

**The City Manager advised that she has reviewed the business plan and it appears that the Theatre can operate without any kind of subsidy if restructured into a non-profit entity. She further advised that any contribution by the City should clearly indicate that operating subsidies will not be provided to the activity which is intended to be self-sufficient, and the Foundation has agreed to make its request for City funding over multiple years, in smaller increments. She recommended that Council support the project as presented by Council Member Harris.**

**Mayor Smith expressed concern with regard to the amount of funds that the City is being requested to subsidize; and asked if the Grandin Road Business District was part of a special tax district. Council Member Harris responded that he was not aware of any discussions relative to a special tax district along Grandin Road.**

**Vice-Mayor Carder inquired about the purchase price of \$400,000.00; whereupon, Council Member Harris stated that the amount included the real estate, the business equipment, etc.**

**Vice-Mayor Carder also inquired about the City-s position in terms of ownership; whereupon, the City Manager responded that the issue has not been addressed, and it is not the City-s intention to own or have an interest in the Grandin Theatre.**

**With regard to a special tax district, the City Manager agreed to contact the business association in the Grandin Road area.**

**Following further discussion and without objection by Council, the City Manager was requested to identify the funding mechanism, to draft a proposed agreement with the Grandin Theatre Foundation relative to funding, and to simultaneously contact the Grandin Road Merchants Association relative to a special tax district.**

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**CITY MARKET-HUMAN RESOURCES:** Mr. Bestpitch expressed concern with regard to individuals engaging in activities that are incompatible with the City=s expectations on the City Market; and advised that removal of benches would not solve existing problems. He stated that citizens do not have benches to enjoy because of inappropriate behavior by a certain segment of the population.

Council Member Bestpitch further advised that the focus should be on behavior rather than removal of benches, and inquired as to whether the City should think in terms of law enforcement responsibility by increasing police presence in the City Market area.

Following comments by Members of Council, the City Manager advised that a panhandling ordinance will be forwarded to Council for consideration on November 5, 2001. She stated that a decision has not been made regarding removal or elimination of benches, but certain trash cans in the City Market area have been relocated.

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

**A P P R O V E D**

**ATTEST:**

**Mary F. Parker**  
City Clerk

**Ralph K. Smith**  
Mayor

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